

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 305572

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT MANILA 20092 SENT ACTION SECSTATE 22 DEC 77

QUOTE S E C R E T MANILA 20092

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PINT, RP, US

SUBJECT: U.S.- PHILIPPINE RELATIONS

1. WHEN I SAW PRESIDENT CARTER ON OCTOBER 27, HE ASKED ME, AFTER MY FIRST WEEKS IN MANILA, TO SEND HIM MY PERSONAL APPRAISAL OF OUR SITUATION. THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE IS FOR SUBMISSION TO THE PRESIDENT.

2. MY FIRST IMPRESSION IS OF THE INTENSITY AND COMPLEXITY OF OUR TIES TO THE PHILIPPINES.

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3. WE HAVE SIGNIFICANT ASSETS: GOOD WILL BORDERING ON ADULATION, SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT AND TRADE, A POLITICAL ORIENTATION FAVORABLE TO OUR INTERESTS, AND OUR MILITARY BASE STRUCTURE. THESE ASSETS ARE BALANCED BY AN ACUTE SENSITIVITY TO OUR CRITICISM AND INVOLVEMENT AND BY THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW GENERAL LESS TIED TO US AND TO OUR COMMON PAST.

4. AT THE MOMENT, THE FOCUS IS ON THE FUTURE OF THE BASES. IN THEM, WE HAVE AN EFFICIENT AND ECONOMICAL MILITARY OUTPOST AS WELL AS A SYMBOL OF OUR PRESENCE IN ASIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN. PRESIDENT MARCOS APPEARS TO REFLECT A GENERAL PUBLIC OPINION IN WANTING TO FIND A POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE FORMULA TO PRESERVE OUR FACILITIES. HE IS PERSONALLY CONDUCTING THE TALKS WITH ME. AT LEAST THE OUTLINE OF A POSSIBLE UNDERSTANDING IS IN SIGHT. YOUR PERSONAL INTEREST, MANIFESTED IN YOUR MEETING WITH MRS. MARCOS AND YOUR LETTER TO HIM, HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE PRESIDENT'S POSITIVE ATTITUDE.

5. EVEN WITH AN AGREEMENT WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS WHICH GIVES US CONTINUED ACCESS ON REASONABLE TERMS, I REALIZE WE MUST GAIN APPROVAL IN THE FACE OF STRONGLY NEGATIVE FEELINGS IN THE PUBLIC AND CONGRESS BASED ON THE PERCEPTION OF THE PHILIPPINE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.

6. PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY COLLAPSED WITH THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN 1972. MANY RESPECTED OBSERVERS HERE TELL ME THAT CORRUPTION, IRRESPONSIBILITY, AND A BREAK-DOWN IN PUBLIC ORDER CONTRIBUTED TO THE COLLAPSE. MARCOS INSISTS, WITH SOMEWHAT LESS EVIDENCE, THAT THE COUNTRY WAS SERIOUSLY THREATENED BY EXISTING COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS.

7. THE RECORD SINCE MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED HAS BEEN
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MIXED. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS ADVANCED. PER CAPITA GNP HAS DOUBLED. PARTIAL LAND REFORM HAS BEEN STARTED. INVESTMENT HAS RISEN. RICE PRODUCTION HAS INCREASED 25 0/0. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A MODEST ADJUSTMENT IN INCOME DISTRIBUTION FAVORING THE LOWEST 40 0/0. AT THE SAME TIME CIVIL LIBERTIES HAVE BEEN SEVERELY CURTAILED, THE JUDICIAL PROCESS HAS LOST SOME OF ITS INDEPENDENCE, AND THERE HAVE BEEN CASES OF INHUMAN TREATMENT AND OF DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGES AND TRIAL.

8. MARCOS NOW FACES THE QUESTION: WHAT NEXT? HE IS CLEARLY FIRMLY IN POWER. THE OPPOSITION IS DISORGANIZED AND WEAK. NEVERTHELESS, THE LEGITIMACY OF HIS REGIME IS CHALLENGED, BOTH EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY, AND FEW ACCEPT HIS REFERENDA AS THE ANSWER. HE STILL FACES THE MOSLEM REVOLT IN THE SOUTH AND SCATTERED ACTIVITIES OF THE MAOIST NEW PEOPLES' ARMY IN LUZON AND THE OTHER ISLANDS.

9. IT IS CLEAR THAT (A) HE WILL NOT RETURN TO THE OLD FORM OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND (B) HE WILL REJECT NEW FORMS WHICH MIGHT THREATEN HIS CONTINUED RULE. HIS

VIEWS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY A MIXTURE OF PERSONAL AMBITION, A FEELING THAT THE COUNTRY IS THREATENED BY THE COMMUNISTS AND AN IRRESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION, AND THE BELIEF THAT HIS RULE IS THE ANSWER BOTH TO INSURING ORDER AND TO FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT. HE DOES NOT FEEL WE FULLY COMPREHEND THE PROBLEMS HE FACES.

10. WITHIN THIS CONTEXT, HE WANTS TO RESPOND TO OUR CONCERNS. HE HAS AGREED TO MEET PRIVATELY WITH ME EACH WEEK TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. HE IS EXAMINING HOW HE CAN MORE EFFECTIVELY EXPLAIN HIS POINT OF VIEW DIRECTLY TO KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND OPINION MAKERS IN THE U.S. AWARE OF CHARGES OF TORTURE AND DISAPPEARANCE, HE APPEARS TO BE SEEKING TO CURB THE EXCESSES OF HIS
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SECURITY FORCES. IN THE CASE OF HIS STRONG-WILLED OPPONENT AQUINO, CURRENTLY UNDER DEATH SENTENCE, HE WILL PROBABLY ULTIMATELY COMPROMISE - IF AQUINO WILL AGREE. HE SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT SOME PRIESTS AND NUNS HAVE COOPERATED WITH THE COMMUNISTS, BUT UNDERSTANDS THE EXTERNAL PROBLEM CAUSED BY THEIR IMPRISONMENT WITHOUT TRIAL. HE HAS PERMITTED SOME GREATER FREEDOM OF CRITICISM. HE SAYS HE IS MOVING TOWARD A FORM OF ELECTED LEGISLATURE. HE IS CONTINUING AN EMPHASIS ON RURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

11. WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WITHIN ANOTHER THREE TO FOUR MONTHS, WE CAN REACH AGREEMENT HERE ON THE FUTURE OF THE BASES, I AM ACUTELY AWARE THAT WE MUST SIMULTANEOUSLY PERSUADE PRESIDENT MARCOS TO TAKE STEPS IN THE TREATMENT OF HIS CITIZENS AND IN DUE PROCESS OF LAW WHICH WILL MAKE OUR DEFENSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP CREDIBLE WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE CONGRESS. I AM ALSO AWARE THAT SUCH STEPS ARE A PREREQUISITE TO ANY DIRECT MEETING BETWEEN YOU AND PRESIDENT MARCOS - SOMETHING HE VERY MUCH DESIRES.

12. THE TASK WILL NOT BE EASY. MARCOS WILL ONLY GO SO FAR. HIS ULTIMATE CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUING OUR BASES COULD YET TURN OUT TO BE UNREASONABLE. MARCOS' CRITICS IN THE UNITED STATES WILL MAINTAIN THEIR CAMPAIGN. SOME ARE UNDOUBTEDLY GENUINELY SEEKING A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY; OTHER ARE PROBABLY MORE INTERESTED IN REMOVING MARCOS THAN IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS. WHILE I BELIEVE MARCOS WILL TAKE STEPS TO ELIMINATE THE INHUMAN TREATMENT OF THOSE UNDER ARREST, WE MAY HAVE TO PRESENT AND DEFEND A BASES AGREEMENT IMPORTANT TO OUR NATIONAL STRATEGIC POLICIES AGAINST A PHILIPPINE HUMAN RIGHTS BACKGROUND THAT IN OTHER RESPECTS MAY BE LESS THAN PERFECT.

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13. IN THE TASK AHEAD, I DEEPLY APPRECIATE YOUR CONTINUING PERSONAL INTEREST, THE FINE SUPPORT OF SECRETARY VANCE AND DICK HOLBROOKE AND THE OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND THE ARMED SERVICES. I AM HOPEFUL THAT WE CAN IN THE END PRESERVE OUR SIGNIFICANT ASSETS HERE AND THIS COMPLEX AND IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PHILIPPINES. NEWSOM

UNQUOTE VANCE

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